

9644 TWO
DISCOURSES:

The FIRST

Of Preaching CHRIST;

The SECOND

Of Particular and Experimental
PREACHING. K.

By JOHN JENNINGS.

With a PREFACE by the Reverend
Mr. ISAAC WATTS.

The SECOND EDITION, Corrected.

- 1 COR. ii. 2. *I determined not to know any thing among
you, save Jesus Christ.*
2 TIM. ii. 15. *A workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of Truth.*
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L O N D O N :

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T.W.O.

DISCOURSES

CHRIST

THE SECOND

OF THE NEW AND IMPROVED

BY THE REV. J. G. S.

NEW YORK



1851

THE

OF THE

OF THE

LONDON

OF THE

To the UNITED
MINISTERS

Of the several
CONGREGATIONS

OF
Protestant DISSENTERS

In the Counties of
*Leicester, Northampton,
Warwick, and Rutland;*

These DISCOURSES
Are humbly Inscribed and Submitted

By their Affectionate Brethren;

and Fellow Labourers;

JOHN JENNINGS.

HE preached Christ crucified our only *Wisdom and Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption.* His Design was to convince Sinners of their absolute Want of *Christ*, that with flaming Affections they might come to him, and from *his Fulness* receive Divine Grace. This is to water the Tree at the Root, whereby it becomes flourishing and fruitful; whereas the laying down of moral Rules for the Exercise of Virtue, and subduing vicious Affections, without directing Men to derive spiritual Strength by Prayer, and in the Use of Divine Ordinances, from the Mediator the Fountain of all Grace; and without representing his Love as the most powerful Motive and Obligation to Obedience, is but *pure Philosophy*, and the highest Effect of it is but *unregenerate Morality.*

Dr. Bates, in his *Familiar Sermon on Dr. Jacomb.*



All our Work must be done *spiritually.*-----
There is in some Men's preaching a spiritual Strain, which spiritual Hearers can discern and relish: And in some Men's, this sacred Tincture is so wanting, that even when they speak of *Spiritual Things*, the Manner is such as if they were *common Matters.*

Mr. Baxter, in his *Gildas Salvianus, Cap. III.*



THE
PREFACE.

***** WHEN I see a Book well writ-
***** ten for the Instruction of
***** W Mankind, I always hope it
***** will spread its good Influences
***** as far and wide as it finds Rea-
ders. But when I meet with a valuable
Treatise, whose Design is to improve the
sacred Skill of Preaching, I am ready to
persuade my self, " Surely this will become
" a more extensive Benefit ; and the good
" Influences of it will reach as many whole
" Assemblies of Men, as there are Mini-
" sters who shall happen to read it." For
this Reason I cannot but take a special Sa-
tisfaction in recommending these two Dis-
courses to the World, which, in my Opinion,
are founded upon the general Principles of
Christi-

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Christianity, and therefore invite the Perusal of All, being written without the narrow Spirit of a Party. They seem to be calculated for the common Good, nor have I observ'd any Thing in them that can justly give Disgust, or awaken any reasonable Resentment:

It must be confess'd, without Controversy, that there are some Things wherein several of the Preachers of the present Time have the Advantage of our Learned and Pious Fathers: But there are other Excellencies in the Sermons of the Puritanical Age, which I would rejoice to find more studiously revived and cultivated in our Day. Among these I know none of more eminent Necessity, Glory, and Usefulness, than those two which are the Subjects of this little Book; I mean the Evangelical Turn of Thought that should run thro' our Ministry, and the Experimental Way of Discourse on practical Subjects.

*It hath been justly observed, that where a great and universal Neglect of preaching Christ hath prevailed in a Christian Nation, it hath given a fatal Occasion to the Growth of Deism and Infidelity; for when Persons have heard the Sermons of
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their Clergy, for many Tears together, and find little of Christ in them, they have taken it into their Heads, that Men may be very good Men, and go safe to Heaven without Christianity; and therefore, tho' they dwell in a Land where the Gospel is profess'd, they imagine there's no Need they should be Christians. But what a Blot and Reproach would it be to our Ministry, if Infidels and Heathens should multiply among us, thro' such a woful Neglect of preaching the peculiar Doctrines of Christ?

Besides, let us consider how little hath been our Success in comparison of the Multitudes converted by our Fathers in the Day of their Ministry. Hath not this been Matter of sore Complaint these many Tears past? Now it is worth our Enquiry, whether it may not be ascribed to the Absence of Christ in our Sermons. And what Reason indeed can we have to expect the Presence and Influence of the Spirit of Christ, if we leave his Person, his Offices, his Grace, and his Gospel, out of our Discourses, or give but a slight and casual Hint at these glorious Subjects, which ought to be our daily Theme? This is what our Author would

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would put us in Mind of in his first Discourse.

And perhaps another Cause of our Want of Success hath been this, That we have too much left off the Way of our Fathers, in distinguishing the Characters of our Hearers, and dividing the Word aright to Saints and Sinners, to the stupid and the profane, the awaken'd and convinc'd, the mournful and penitent, the presumptuous and obstinate, the deserted and despairing.

This Method appears eminently in the Labours of the former Age. Those two great and good Men, Mr. Flavell, and Mr. Baxter, might be divided in their Sentiments on other Subjects, but you find this Conduct runs thro' all their practical Writings. This is a great Part of what the second Discourse here recommends to us, under the Title of Experimental Preaching.

Our Author indeed assumes not so much to himself, as to address any besides Students and Younger Ministers. But if in the middle Age of Life we should examine our Performances by the Light of this Treatise, 'tis possible we and our People might be Gainers by it.

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Have we not been too often tempted to follow the Modish Way, and speak to our Hearers in general Terms, as tho' they were all converted already, and sufficiently made Christians by a National Profession? Have not some of us spent our Labour to build them up in the Practice of Duties, without teaching them to search whether the Foundation has been laid in an entire Change and Renovation of Heart? Do we lead them constantly to enquire into the inward State of their Souls, the special Tempers and Circumstances of their Spirits, their peculiar Difficulties, Dangers and Temptations, and give them peculiar Assistance in all this Variety of the Christian Life?

With how much more Efficacy does the Word of God impress the Conscience, when every Hearer finds himself described without the Preacher's personal Knowledge of him? When his own spiritual State is painted to the Life, and (as it were) set before his Eyes in the Language of the Preacher? When a Word of Conviction, Advice, or Comfort, is spoken so pertinently to his own Case, that he takes it as directed to himself. How much more powerful and more pene-

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trating will our Sermons be, when those who come into our Assemblies shall be convinced and judged, and have the Secrets of their Hearts made manifest, and confess that God is in the midst of us of a Truth?

The Perusal of these excellent Discourses in Manuscript, hath given me so much Satisfaction, that I take a sensible Pleasure to think that the Press will communicate them to the World; and then I hope for a further Share of Profit, by keeping them always at my right Hand when I am preparing for the Service of the Sanctuary. May the blessed Spirit of God teach those who enter into the sacred Office, this holy Skill of winning Souls! May He awaken us all to see what may be mended in our Ministrations, in order to publish the Gospel of Christ with more illustrious and divine Success!

4 OC 58

LONDON, June 14,
1723.

I. WATTS.



DISCOURSE I.

Of Preaching Christ.

Address'd to

YOUNGER MINISTERS.

Dear Friends and Brethren,



WE profess our selves Christians, and are, I hope, upon careful and rational Enquiry satisfied that the Religion of *Jesus* comes from God; and that it is a most glorious Dispensation, not only for the sublime Wonders of its Doctrine, and the Divine Purity of its Precepts, but that it excels all other Religions in the Strength of its Motives, the Richness of its Promises, and the Sufficiency of the Divine Aid attending it.

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Now in all the peculiar Glories of this Religion, *Christ* is interwoven, like *Phidias's* Name in the Shield, which could not be effaced without destroying the Shield it self.

The Doctrines concerning *Jesus* make the Glory and Advantage of his Religion ; and so run through the whole, that *preaching Christ*, and *preaching the Gospel*, are, in Scripture Style, synonymous Terms: As in 1 *Cor.* i. 23. — ii. 2. and innumerable other Places.

The *preaching of Christ* is our Business, our Charge, and our Glory ; but oh ! *who is sufficient for these things ?* Give me leave then, my dear Brethren and Friends, to remind my-self and You, what regard a Minister should have to our Redeemer in his Preaching and other Administrations.

I. *Let us make Christ the Design and End of our Preaching.* If we seek principally to please Men, then are we not the Servants of *Christ*. If we look no farther than our own Humour, Reputation, or temporal Advantage, and expend our Talents to our own private Use, how shall we make up our Accounts to our Master ? and what Reward can we expect from him ?

Our ultimate End should be the personal Glory of *Christ*. That the Glory of *Christ* as God, is the ultimate End of the Gospel, none can doubt ; Nay, as a Creature, he is in his Perfections and Felicity, far superior to the rest of the Creation ; so that it is said of this di-
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vine Person, *Heb. ii. 10. All things are for him, as well as by him.* Is he not worth ten thousand of us? More worth than the World? The only begotten Son of God, whom the highest Angels adore? Now if the Glory of *Christ's* Person, to the Honour of the Father, be the principal End in the divine Schemes and Actings, it should also be our highest View and Design. Nor want we Motives of Gratitude to lead us to this: He is the Founder of our Religion, to whom all our Hopes are owing: He has honoured us, and well deserved that we should honour him: Nor is there any Danger of lessening the Honour of God the Father thereby, when we consider him, as the Scriptures represent him, *as one with the Father, the equal Image of the invisible God, to the Glory of God the Father.*

Again, as the Glory of *Christ's* Person should be our ultimate End; so the advancing the Kingdom of his Grace amongst Men, is to be the subordinate End.

The Recovery of fallen Creatures to Holiness and Happiness is the immediate Design of the Gospel. *Christ is come into the world to save sinners,* 1 Tim. i. 15. And he sends us to preach his Gospel, that we might promote the same Salvation, *That Men might live soberly, righteously and godly, looking for that blessed hope,* Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13. To make Men holy, to bring them to the Faith of *Christ*, the Imitation of him, and Communion with him, here and

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and hereafter, to the Glory of the Father thro' *Christ*, must be the constant End of our Preaching. We should not think it enough to inform, to amuse, to please, to affect, but we must aim farther than this, to bring them to trust in *Christ*, and withall, to make them penitent and holy; and every Subject must be managed with this View: And let it be our great Care, on a more speculative Subject (as suppose one of the sublime Doctrines of Grace) still to keep the End in view, and apply it practically, or our Labour is lost.

Let us by all Means endeavour to save precious Souls, but yet aim at a higher End than this, *viz.* that we our selves may be *a sweet savour of Christ unto God*, 2 Cor. ii. 15. And then, tho' we miss of our secondary End, and are not as we could wish, *the savour of life unto life*, unto any greater Number; yet in being the *savour of death unto death to them that perish*, we shall be Instruments of glorifying the Justice and Long-suffering of *Christ*, and be Witnesses for God, *that there has been a Prophet amongst them*; our primary End is answered, *our labour is with the Lord*, and we in the meantime are supported, *tho' Israel be not gathered, for the word shall not return empty*.

Nay farther, it is not enough that the Strain of our Preaching is adapted to the true Design of the Gospel, but we must at Heart sincerely intend it; otherwise, tho' our Discourses be unexceptionable, yet if our Designs be wrong
and

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and base, tho' others be saved thro' our Ministry, *we shall be cast-aways.*

II. *Let Christ be the Matter of our Preaching.* Let us display the Divine Dignity and Loveliness of his Person, by the Light of his Word, as *God manifest in the flesh.*

Let us unfold his Mediatorial Office, the Occasion, Design, and Purport of his great Undertaking.

Let us remind our Hearers of the Particulars of his Incarnation, Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension and Intercession.

Let us set forth the Characters he bears, as a Prophet, Priest and King; as a Shepherd, Captain, Advocate and Judge.

Let us demonstrate and shew the Sufficiency of his Satisfaction, the Tenor and Excellence of the Covenant confirmed with and by him, our Justification by his Righteousness, Adoption thro' our Relation to him, Sanctification by his Spirit, our Union with him as our Head, and safe Conduct by his Providence; and how Pardon, Grace and Glory accrue to the Elect thro' his Suretiship and Sacrifice, and are dispensed by his Hand.

Let us in his Name declare and explain his most holy Laws, and teach the People whatever Duties he has commanded to God, our Neighbour, and our Selves.

Let us quicken the Saints to Duty, raise their Hopes, establish and comfort their Souls, by the exceeding great and precious Promises of

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of his Gospel, which in him are *yea and amen*.

I but just give short and imperfect hints of these Things, and refer to the Apostolical Writings, which you'll find are made up of Discourses on these and such like Topicks.

III. *Let the Manner of our Preaching on any Subject, distinguish it from mere Discourses on Natural Religion, by a continual regard to Christ.*

If we are upon the Perfections of God, let us consider them as shining in his Son, and exemplify'd in his Undertaking, *who is the brightness of his Father's glory; and express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3.

If we set forth Gospel-Blessings and Promises, let us consider them as purchased by a Saviour's Blood, and distributed by his Bounty; *For by his own blood he has obtained eternal redemption*, Heb. ix. 12. And *from him the whole body is supplied*, Eph. iv. 16.

If we take notice of the Providence of God, let us not forget that *all power is given to Christ, in heaven and in earth*, Matt. xxviii. 18. And that *he is head over all things for the church*, Ephes. i. 22.

If by the Terrors of the last Judgment we perswade Men, let the *wrath of the Lamb* be denounced, and the dreadful Reckoning for abused Grace and a slighted Saviour, for *this is the condemnation*, Joh. iii. 19.

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If we are assisting the Devotions of the People in Confession, Prayer, or Praise, let their Repentance spring from *looking on Christ whom they have pierced*, Zech. xii. 10. Let their Faith in Prayer fix steadily on *Jesus*, as to him is owing our Acceptance and Success, and *our boldness at the throne of Grace* flows from regarding *Christ* as our great *High Priest*, Heb. iv. 14, 16. and let us teach them to *give thanks to God the Father thro' him*, to whom it is owing that God is our Father, Col. iii. 17.

When we are upon the Subject of Duty, *Christ* is by no Means to be forgotten; for to persuade Men to practical Godliness, is one of the most difficult Parts of a Minister's Work. Men will hear with a curious Satisfaction a speculative Discourse; and with some Joy attend to the Displays of God's Grace; nay, a *Felix* may tremble when Judgment is preached: many indeed will bear to hear of Duty too; but to induce them to practise it, *hic labour hoc opus*: Here we had need call in all Helps, and take all Advantages, which the Gospel as well as the Light of Nature can furnish. In other Discourses, we are rather attacking *Satan's* Out-works, a blind and prejudiced Understanding; in practical Subjects we assault *Satan's* strongest Fort, a corrupted Will: We may gain the Understanding on our Side, and gain some share of the Affections; but to subdue a perverse Will, and make Men good practical Christians, is not so easy a Thing, that we can afford to spare any Motive or quickning Con-

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sideration. But here I must be more particular in explaining how we should regard *Christ* in preaching Duty.

1. Let us represent Duty as the natural and necessary Fruit of Faith in *Christ*, and Love to him. When by Faith we behold a crucify'd *Jesus*, do we not tremble at the Severity of God's Justice, and regret and hate those Sins that occasioned his Sorrows? When we farther consider, that *by his stripes we are healed*, can we forbear *to love him who hath first loved us*? Shall we not *live to him that died for us*? Can we have the Heart to *crucify him afresh*? No, let us make his Service our Business, his Sufficiency our Confidence, his Life our Example, and his Blessings our Portion and Choice.

From such Actings of Faith and Outgoings of Love, flows that divine Temper which constitutes the new Creature, and lays the Foundation of all right Gospel-Obedience. Thus therefore let us continually trace Gospel Duties up to their Fountain-head, that the People may learn, 'tis not outward Reformation that will stand the Test in the Day of Judgment, but an inward Renewal of the Soul; that *the tree must first be made good, before there can be any good fruit*; and that all must be done for *Christ's* sake, and flow from *faith working by love*, Gal. v. 6.

2. Let us enforce Duties with Motives respecting *Christ*; as grateful Love to him should constrain us; as Fear of his Wrath should
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awe us ; as we would approve our selves the Disciples and Followers of *Christ* ; as we would enjoy Communion with him ; as we would promote his Honour and Interest ; and as we would have Joy, and not Confusion, at his appearing. Not that we should neglect any Motives which the Light of Nature can furnish, and are level to the Capacities of the People : We have need enough of all ; but if we go no further than these, our Exhortations will want far the greatest Part of their Weight : we must *befeech and exhort by the Lord Jesus*, 1 Theff. iv. 1.

3. Let us consider Duties, as to be performed by the Grace of *Christ* : Telling the People, that our Fruitfulness depends on our being engrafted into this Vine ; and that a Holy Walk is being *led by the Spirit* ; and when we do good, it is *not we, but the grace of God that is in us* ; that out of a sense of Weakness, *we must be made strong, and do all things through Christ strengthening us*, Phil. iv. 13.

4. Let us consider all good Works as acceptable through the Merits of *Christ* ; and remind our Hearers, that *could we do all, we were but unprofitable servants* ; and that we must seek to be found at last, *not having on our own righteousness, but that which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9.

IV. Let us deliver our Selves in a Style becoming the Gospel of Christ : Not with
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great swelling words of vanity, or in the Style of the Heathen Sophists, or Words that *Man's Wisdom teacheth*, and may perhaps found best in our own Ears ; but let us use *great plainness of speech*, and seek to find out such *acceptable words*, as may best reach the Understanding and Affections of the bulk of an Auditory.

As for the affectionate Part of a Discourse, Brethren, I suppose, upon a View of antient and modern Learning, you allow that the Men of the East, and next to them the antient *Greeks*, excelled in Fire, and Works of the Imagination ; and that the Moderns inhabiting milder western Climates, even the *French* (from whom upon many Accounts we should expect the Most of this Sort) produce but an empty Flash, in comparison of the solid Heat of the Antients ; and rather amuse us with little Delicacies, than by masterly Strokes command our whole Souls. Now the Scriptures are the noblest Remains of what the East has produced, and much surpass the best of the *Greeks* in the Force of their Oratory : Let us take the Spirit and Style of them, and thence borrow bold Figures and Allusions, strong Descriptions and commanding Address to the Passions. But I'm prevented in all I would say on this so important Head, by the Archbishop of *Cambray's Dialogues concerning Eloquence*, which I'm as little capable of improving upon, as I am of commending them as they deserve,

And

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And now, Brethren, let me lay before you some Reasons and Motives to back this friendly Admonition concerning *preaching Christ*.

(I.) 'Tis the way to have our Labours accepted of *Christ*, and to have Communion with him in our Work: — even *Paul* cries out, *Who is sufficient for these things?* With how much more reason may we? Does not our chearful Progress in our Work depend on a Divine *Afflatus*, and the Spirit dispensed by *Christ*? But if we take no Notice of him in our Preaching, and do not distinguish our Selves from the moral Philosophers of the *Gentiles*, how can we expect any more of this enliv'ning and encouraging Presence of *Christ* than they had; nay, we have less ground to expect it, if we wilfully slight and slur so noble a Revelation, which they were never favoured withal.

(II.) 'Tis the Way to win Souls to *Christ*, and make lively Christians. The Success of the Gospel, is certainly no less owing to the Power of its Motives, than to the Clearness, Fulness, and Purity of its Precepts. These peculiar Motives of the Gospel, have all such a respect to *Christ*, that they are enervated if He be disregarded: The Gospel Scheme is what God in his Wisdom has pitch'd upon to reform Mankind, and save them; and he seems in honour concerned to crown it with greater Success than any other Scheme whatsoever;
the

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the preaching of Christ crucified is the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. If we maim the Gospel, and suppress a good Part of it, we can expect but a very defective Success in the Nature of Things; nay, may we not fear God's Honour is concerned in such Case to blast us, and we shall be like to labour almost in vain.

Observation agrees with this Theory: The great Masters of Reason, who have less regard to *Christ* in their Preaching, may, indeed, have a Charm for one of an hundred, who have a Taste of the Beauties of fine Reasoning, and be of use to them, whilst the Bulk of an Auditory is a-sleep: Alas! with what Heart can we go on, entertaining two or three, to the starving of most of the Souls in an Auditory. May we not also observe a happier Effect of a Strain prudently evangelical on Christians themselves; that they who sit under it are more lively, zealous, ready to every good Work, and heavenly minded, than those Christians who have heard less of the Gospel.

(III.) It is a direct Imitation of the Apostles of *Christ*: *Christ* himself, whilst upon Earth, preach'd the Gospel in Parables, in a concealed Manner, distantly and with reserve: He could not so fully take the Advantage of his Resurrection, Satisfaction, Ascension, and the like, not yet done, made, or prov'd: He had many Things to say, which his Disciples could not then bear; but he declares them af-

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terward by his Spirit in his Apostles : They therefore are the true Pattern of our Preaching, now, after the Mystery of Redemption is brought to light, and hath its full Evidence.

How then did the Apostles preach *Christ* ? 'Tis endless to attempt a full Detail of Particulars ; any part of the Apostolical Writings is Authority sufficient to our Purpose ; and therefore I've been sparing in Quotations all along, as needless to those who will look into these Writings with this View. And here we don't desire to alledge or insist upon any Passages in their Writings, which may be supposed to be writ and inserted for Reasons peculiar to that Age and Country in which the Apostles wrote, and in which perhaps we are not so much obliged to imitate them in our Preaching ; for what will remain after all these are put out of the Account, will, I'm satisfy'd, be as full to our Purpose, as these that are struck off.

I'll only then by way of Specimen, select some of the Apostles Discourses on Duties most moral, where we are aptest to forget a mention of *Christ*, or respect to him, that it may at once appear the Apostles shuned not the pressing such Duties, or a regard to *Christ*, in the treating on them.

I Cor. vi. 8. Honesty is pressed by these Motives-----the *unrighteous, thieves and extortioners, shall not inherit the kingdom of God* (which in the Style of the New Testament is *Christ's Kingdom of Grace and Glory*.)-----That *Christians are converted by the spirit*

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Spirit of Christ, and justified by his righteousness.

I Cor. vi. 15. Chastity is enjoyn'd, as *our bodies are members of Christ, as we are one spirit with him, temples of the holy Ghost, and bought with a price.*

I Cor. viii. & ix. Alms is recommended, as it will bring a large Tribute of *praise to God for our subjection to the Gospel of Christ — and Christ became poor for our sakes.*

Tit. iii. 2. Evil Speaking is forbidden, because *we were foolish and wicked; but the grace of God has made the difference; not for our righteousness, but of his free mercy he has regenerated us, and given us his holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, by whom we are justified, and heirs of glory.*

Rom. xiii. Subjects are commanded to obey Magistrates, *because the gospel-day is come, and we should put on Christ Jesus.*

Eph. v. 25. Husbands are charged to love their Wives, *as Christ loved the church.*

Eph. v. 22. Wives obedience is urged, *because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church.*

Tit. ii. 9. Servants are exhorted to their Duty, *as they would adorn the doctrine of Christ — because grace so teacheth, and that we look for Christ's appearance, who gave himself for us, that we might be holy.*

Now what is there in these Motives peculiar to one Age or Nation? Are not all these as good now as formerly? And are Men so ready

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ready in their Duty, that we have no need of them?

Nay, it is worth Observation, that the Apostles do not confine themselves to Motives peculiarly adapted to the Duty they are pressing, and which serve to enforce one Duty rather than another; but, as you may look back and see, when such proper Motives are not at hand, they take without any scruple common or general ones, which will equally enforce any Duty whatsoever.

And why shou'd not we introduce the Peculiarities of the Gospel on all Occasions, as frequently as the Apostles did? If our Schemes of Theology will not allow us, we have reason to suspect we are in a different Scheme from the Apostles. Are we afraid Men will make perverse use of such Doctrines as the Apostles used for Motives? The Apostles chose to venture it, and why shou'd not we? If we will not dare to preach such a Gospel as may be perverted by Men of corrupt Minds to their own Injury, we must not expect to be Instruments of any Good: If we'll be *the favour of life* to some, we must expect to be *the favour of death* to others, or not preach at all.

I confess even the *Remonstrant* Scheme (which, I think, considerably sinks the Doctrines of Grace) does allow room to regard Christ abundantly more than most Preachers of that Set do: I wou'd meet them on their own Principles: What hinders their frequently in-

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culcating the Merits of *Christ*, the Depravity of our Natures, the Necessity of Regeneration, the Aids of Grace and Union, and Communion with *Christ*? These Topicks it were to be hoped, might have their Effect: But, alas! how few of the *Remonstrants* improve to Advantage so much of the Gospel as they hold and receive: And it makes me less inclined to this Scheme, that it so generally draws those that embrace it into a strain of Preaching, even on practical Subjects, so different from that of the Apostles; and inclines them, I know not how, to suppress those glorious Evangelical Motives (which yet their own Principles might allow) by which the Apostles enforced Gospel Duties.

(IV.) So only shall we deserve the Name of Preachers of *Christ*---Only did I say? I'm afraid this may sound too harsh---Come let us put the Matter as soft and candid as common Sense will allow us---So shall we most evidently or best deserve this honourable Title.

Whilst a Preacher keeps off the Peculiarities of the Gospel, and says nothing but what the Light of Nature would also suggest and authorize, give me leave to say, a Stranger might possibly doubt whether he is a Deist or a Christian; the Question is like an imperfect Mathematical Problem, which equally admits of different Solutions.

Suppose the Ghosts of *Paul* and *Seneca* to come meer Strangers into an Assembly where

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one was haranguing the People in this abstracted Manner; I am apt to think *Seneca* would claim him as a Philosopher of his own Sect and Religion. Now if *Paul* shou'd also make his claim to him as a Minister of *Christ*, how cou'd the Question be decided without allowing *Seneca* to be a Preacher of *Christ* also?

On the other Hand, If a Preacher picks out some of the Truths of the Gospel of *Christ*, and even the peculiar and glorious Truths of Christianity; but so unhappily manages them, as not to lead People to Holiness, and the Imitation of *Christ* thereby, what is this to the Purpose of Preaching, to the Design of *Christ* and the Gospel? Such are quite off that Scheme which is calculated to *destroy the works of the devil, and teach Men sobriety, righteousness, and godliness*: It is not only *Christ without us* we are to preach, but *Christ in us*, and our putting on *Christ Jesus* by a holy Heart and Life.

If the Apostle *James* should come again, and make a Visitation to our Churches, and hear such a Preacher, he would imagine he was got amongst such People as he writes against in his Epistle; he would be apt when the Minister had done, in his Zeal for *Christ*, to take the Text in Hand again, and supply what the Preacher had omitted, *viz.* The Application; and to say to the Auditors, *Know ye not that faith without works is dead?* If the Preacher shou'd here interrupt him, saying, 'Hold, spare thy Pains, the Spirit of God will make

the Application, and teach Men Holiness ; ---
 would not *James* reply, ' I and the rest of
 ' the Apostles were taught to preach otherwise,
 ' and give particular Exhortations to Duty ;
 ' we judged we might as well leave it to the
 ' Spirit, without our Pains, to reveal the Do-
 'ctrine, as to instruct Men in the Practice of
 ' the Gospel.

Upon the whole, Brethren, let it be our
 Resolution to study and preach *Christ Jesus* :
 On this Subject, there is room for the strictest
 Reasoning and most sublime Philosophy ; it de-
 serves, invites and inspires the strongest Fire of the
 Orator ; in extolling *Christ*, we cannot shock
 the most delicate Taste by overstrained Hy-
 perboles ; here the Climax may rise till it is out
 of Sight ; our Imagery cannot be too strong
 and rich ; and what more moves than an Apo-
 strophe to *Christ* ? Or what Prosopopœias more
 commanding than those in which he is intro-
 duced ?

Should our Lord himself appear and give
 you a Charge at your entrance on the Mini-
 stry, would he not say (what indeed he has
 said already :)

' *As the Father hath sent me, so send I you*
 ' *to preach the kingdom of God ; that every*
 ' *knee may bow to me, and every tongue con-*
 ' *fess me : ----- teach them to observe all*
 ' *things whatsoever I have commanded you ;*
 ' *and tell them, that without me, they can do*
 ' *nothing ; that when they have done all, they*
 ' *are unprofitable servants, and must be found*
 ' *in*

Of Preaching Christ.

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in my righteousness : ——— become all things to all men : seek words which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; that, you may gain souls, and bring in my sheep for whom I laid down my life ; ——— if ye love me, feed my sheep : ——— I've call'd you friends ; do all in my name, and to mine honour ; so I will be with you always ; and if you thus watch for souls, you shall give up your account with joy at my appearing : ——— this is the Preaching, which tho' it seem foolish to many, shall prove the power of God and wisdom of God : cast forth the net on this side, and so may you expect to catch many souls : be followers of my Apostles as they are of me, and in my name shall you do wonders : if you preach me, I and mine shall therein rejoyce : be not ashamed of my Gospel, and I will not be ashamed of you.

But to arrive at any tolerable Perfection in Preaching Christ, is a work of Time, the Result of a careful perusal of the Scriptures, and studying the Hearts of Men : It requires the mortifying the Pride of carnal Reason, a great Concern for Souls, an humble Dependance on the Spirit of God, with the lively Exercise of Devotion in our Closets.

As for the reasoning Part on the more agreed Points of our Religion, a young Preacher sooner may get to considerable Excellence : but the Christian Orator is longer in finishing : We may sooner get necessary Truths into our own Minds, and come at Minds of our own

own Size and Taste; but by proper Motives and Ways to reach Souls of different Make and Turn, even the lowest of the Vulgar, is what very few quickly arrive at: But let us not despair; if we thus regard Christ in our Ministrations, we may reasonably expect the Assistance of his Spirit, and we shall be able to do all this thro' Christ strengthening us.



As for the reasoning part on the more sacred Points of our Religion, a young Preacher sooner may get to considerable Excellence; but the Christian's Graces is longer in ripening: We may sooner get necessary Truths into our Minds, and come at Minds of our

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DISCOURSE II.
Of Particular and Experimental Preaching.

Address'd to

YOUNGER MINISTERS.

Gentlemen,

Rightly to divide the Word of Truth is the necessary Care of a Minister, if he would be approved of God, and be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, 2 Tim. ii. 15. And it is a Skill worth studying for, and labouring to attain: Our Success, and the Good of Souls, depends upon it more than is commonly imagined.

No question you may have heard many honest People express their Dissatisfaction with many

many Preachers, in such Terms as these:
*' They go on constantly in a general Way that
 ' does not come close to the Heart, reaches not
 ' my Case and Experience, and I cannot edify
 ' by them.——* Their Complaint is not altogether without Meaning or Reason, as I hope you'll be convinced by and by.

To keep a little in view that Passage of Scripture I've mentioned, the *dividing the Word* may mean these four Things.

I. *Going through the variety of Gospel Subjects*: Declaring the whole Counsel of God, the Doctrines of Grace, Threatnings, Promises, and Duties of Morality; and giving each its due Proportion.

Some finding their Thoughts flow most readily and affectionately on the Doctrines of Grace, and that by these they best command the Affections of the Hearers, are altogether upon them; and neglect to *teach the People to observe whatsoever Christ has commanded them*. I bear many of them witness they have a *zeal for God*, but I wish it were more *according to knowledge*: They do not sure sufficiently consider that Holiness is the Design of Christianity; and our Preaching on other Heads, is in order the better to enforce Duty, and make Men like to *Christ*.

I am afraid, from what I've observed, that this Strain of Preaching will encrease the Number of such Hearers, whom our Saviour describes by the stony Ground in the Parable

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ble of the Sower ; namely, such who are all Notion and Affection, with a forward Profession ; but have an unsubdued Will, no Root in themselves, and bring forth no Fruit to God. This Strain, I fear, though it leads many toward *Christ*, will bring but few safely to him : Many of their Hearers, with *Christ* much in their Mouths, will prove but Hypocrites settled on their Lees, and Slaves to Lust. Nor is this Strain more happy for the uniform Growth of the sincere Christian : They that sit under it, are too frequently low, imperfect, and partial in practical Godliness ; distempered with Conceit and preposterous Zeal for Words and Phrases, and Things of little or no Consequence ; perplexed and perplexing others with a thousand groundless Scruples ; *children in understanding*, and it were happy were they so in Malice too ; but alas ! their Narrowness of Mind infects the Heart with uncharitable Affections to Christians of different Perswasions.

. Others having not arrived at a Relish of the Doctrines of Grace themselves, suppress them in their Preaching, and are altogether on Morality, enforcing it with no Motives of the Gospel, except some of those addressed to Fear.

—These, if they are Masters of much Fire, may convince some ; but it fares with most of their Converts, as with the Man in the Parable, out of whom the unclean Spirit went for a while ; but finding his House empty, returned with seven more ; and the latter End of

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such is worse than the Beginning. — Or else, the awakened Hearer takes up with a proud Dependance upon a mistaken, external, and Pharisaical Righteousness. — Or else the convinced Sinner, not being by his Teacher led to *Christ*, proceeds not, settles not, but abiding long under the doubtful Concern, is wearied with it, weary of it, and comes to nothing; which seems to be the Thought in *Hos. xiii. 13. Ephraim is an unwise son; he should not stay long in the Place of the breaking forth of children.* — Or lastly, if any are converted under his Ministry, 'tis very usual they are forced to desert, to find richer and sweeter Pasture for their Souls.

Some of their Hearers may possibly prefer this Strain of Preaching; but it does not thence follow they are the better for it: And here I'll recite a Paragraph out of *Remarkable Passages in the Life of a private Gentleman.*

' Spiritual searching Discourses I did not so much savour as meer moral Doctrines; tho' God knows too immoral my self. — The hopes I had conceived of the Strength of my good Resolutions rendered them grateful — Seneca's Morals I read with great pleasure — Mr. Baxter's Saints Rest frightened me; so in reading a few Pages, I threw it by.

Thus with regret he tells us what little Profit he had in that Way, of his Fondness of which he was ashamed, when he came to be of *Paul's Mind, to count all dross and dung that he might gain Christ.*

II. The

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II. *The putting of a Thought in several distinct Views and Lights for different Purposes and Designs.* The sacred Writers are herein our Pattern, and that not by chance, but for wise Reasons. One View is designed to raise one Affection; another View, to excite another of a different Sort: And farther, one of the Views is designed as an Antidote against the Poison, which the Corruption of Mens Hearts might draw out of the other.

For instance, the Terms and Way of our Justification and Salvation, are frequently stated thus——

That we must be found in Christ, having on the righteousness, which is of God by faith, Phil. iii. 9. *and we must be made the righteousness of God in him,* 2 Cor. v. 21.

And this View is exquisitely adapted to humble us, to draw forth Love and Gratitude, and encourage our Hopes and Dependance.

But lest this Phraseology alone made use of, should beget Security, at other Times we are told——

That by works a Man is justified, and not by faith only; and that faith without works is dead, Jam. ii. 24, 26. and that the Enquiry at the last Day shall be, who has fed the hungry, cloathed the naked? &c. Matt. xxv.

And most commonly these two Views are united in the same Paragraph: that one may prevent the ill Consequences Man's Perverseness would draw from the other: As Physi-

cians finding some dangerous Effect likely to follow from a Drug of sovereign Virtue, mix some other with it to prevent the fatal Consequences.

So we are said to be *elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus*, 1 Pet. i. 2.

Again we are told, that *by Grace we are saved through faith, the gift of God, not of works; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ unto good works*, Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I may give another Instance, in the different Ways the Scripture speaks of Power and Duty.

Sometimes we are told, that *we cannot come to Christ except the Father draw*, Joh. vi. 44. *That without Christ we can do nothing*, Joh. xv. 5. *That if we live, it is not we but Christ that liveth in us*, Gal. ii. 20.

Now these Views tend to hide Pride from Man, to create a Diffidence of our selves, and to centre our Hopes and Dependance in *Christ*.

But lest the slothful and wicked Servant should make his Impotence his Excuse; we are called upon to *turn and make us new hearts*, exhorted to *ask and we shall receive*, and are assured *God will give the spirit to them that ask him*, Luke xi. 9, 13.

And how happily are these two Views united in *Phil. ii. 12, 13. Work out your own salvation*

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vation with fear and trembling ; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do.

Now, less skilful Dividers of the Word deal entirely in one of these Views only, and neglect the other ; and whilst they are labouring to excite one good Affection, they raise another of a bad Tendency together with it : To this in part is owing that there are so many low or distempered Christians. Nor is this Partiality more happy at effecting the real Conversion of Sinners, who generally under such Management, are either left asleep, and settled in a fond conceit of their own Righteousness ; or else *stumble at the rock of offence*, (in a different Manner indeed from what the *Jews* did) thinking to find by *Christ* a Way to Heaven, without Holiness or moral Honesty.

III. *Distinctly explaining and enforcing particular Duties, and opposing particular Sins.* It is true the whole Scheme of Gospel Duty is deducible from the general Heads of Faith and Love ; but alas ! most Mens Minds are slow, confused, and erroneous in long Deductions, and it is our Business to lead them on in every Step, and to shew what particular Duties to God, our Neighbour, and our Selves, will flow from these Principles, and are necessary to make the Man of God perfect. We must particularly teach them to *add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity*, if we would not leave them *blind and*
un-

unfruitful, 2 Pet. i. 7. And we should in a particular Manner speak of *the fruits of the spirit, as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance*; and at proper Seasons explain and enforce each of them, Gal. v. 22, 23. We should apply the Lamp of the Word to detect and disgrace all the particular *works of darkness*, and to make manifest *the fruits of the flesh; such as adultery, lasciviousness, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.

If I should read to a sick Person a learned Lecture of the benefit of Health, and exhort him to take care to recover it; but never enquire into the Nature of his Disease, or prescribe proper Methods and Medicines for the Cure; he would hardly acquiesce in me for his Physician, or resign the Care of his bodily Health to me.

Nor is it a more likely Way to the Soul's Health to rest in general Exhortations to Holiness only, without distinctly handling the several Branches thereof, and Sins opposite thereunto.

IV. *Particularly applying to the several Cases, Tempers, and Experiences of the Hearers.* Besides many Thoughts suited in general to all Cases, there might properly arise in the Application of most Subjects, Thoughts distinctly proper to the Converted and Unconverted, to notional Hypocrites, and meer

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meer Moralists, to Mourners, to Backsliders and lazy Christians, and at several Times to a much greater Variety of Characters, and Persons.

Now such particular Addresses, when the Case is lively drawn, in the natural Language of the Sort of Men intended, and judiciously and artfully spoken to, are the closest, most weighty, and most useful parts of the Application.

That *this* is the true Way of addressing an Auditory, *viz.* to divide them into several Classes, and distinctly speak to each, will be plain, if we look thro' the Apostolical Writings, and I might add the Prophetical also with this View; and we shall find that both Prophets and Apostles frequently take care to distinguish *the holy and the vile*, the Converted and Unconverted: As for instance, as to their Knowledge and Apprehensions of Things. 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. *The natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit—they are foolishness to him—he cannot know them: But the spiritual judge all things.* And also as to their Obedience to the Law. Rom. viii. 7, 8. *The carnal mind is enmity against God—is not subject to God's law, nor can be subject, or please God.*

They particularly rebuke Scoffers, and confute Gainfayers——*behold ye despisers and wonder, and perish*——as for Instance, those who denied or cavilled at the Resurrection. 1 Cor. xv. *Thou fool, that which thou sowest, is not quickened except it die, &c.* and also
those

those that were for a Faith without Works: Jam. ii. *Wilt thou know, vain man, that faith without works is dead, &c.*

They address to carnal stupid Sinners in an awful Way; denouncing woe to them that are at ease: As Paul when he made Felix tremble, Acts xxiv. 25. or as Stephen, Acts vii. 51—54. *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised, &c.*

They lead convinced Sinners to Christ; to those that are enquiring they say, *if ye will enquire, enquire ye, return, come, turn to the strong hold; if the Lord hath torn, he will heal.* As in Acts ii. 38. *Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins, &c.* Acts xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, &c.*

They reason with the Moralist; and those that trust in themselves that they are righteous; shewing their righteousness is as filthy rags: Rom. iii. *the Law saith, there is none righteous, but all the World are guilty before God; therefore by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified; but the righteousness of God is manifested, that God might freely justify them that believe on Jesus; therefore man is justified by faith; boasting is excluded by the law of faith.* And Gal. iii. *Ye received the spirit by the hearing of faith—the gospel was before preached to Abraham—they that are of the works of the Law, are under the curse. But the Law could not disannul the covenant confirmed before, but was a school-*

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schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith; they then that are Christ's, are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

They sharply rebuke and expose pretending Hypocrites, shewing them their Abominations, detecting and confounding the Wretches that delight to know God's ways, and hear his word; but will not do it: as Peter, Acts viii. 21. *Thou hast no part in this matter; thy heart is not right in the sight of God; and James in chap. ii. Shew me thy faith, without thy works—the devils believe and tremble.*

They spirit up Christians that have but a little Strength, and perswade them to make farther Advances in Religion; that he that is feeble may be as David: as in Heb. v. at the end, and the beginning of ch. vi. *Ye are dull of hearing—for the time ye ought to have been teachers—strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age—therefore, leaving the first principles, let us go on to perfection.*

They deal with the several Sorts of distemper'd Christians tenderly, and yet plainly and faithfully; as particularly with those who idolized one Minister, and despised others; telling them, it is *not by might or power of man, but by God's Spirit*, that the Gospel is successful; as in 1 Cor. iii. *While one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Who is Paul or Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? 'Tis God that giveth the increase—*Paul, Apollos, Cephas,

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all are yours.—They endeavour to soften those of too rigid a Temper, exhorting them, *not to speak to the grief of those whom God hath smitten: as in 2 Cor. ii. 7. Ye ought rather to forgive and comfort him: I beseech you confirm your love towards him. Gal. vi. 1. If a man be overtaken in a fault, restore him in the spirit of meekness, considering lest thou also be tempted.*—They talk roundly to those, who are apt to make God the Author of Sin; who say *we unavoidably pine away in our iniquities, and how can we then be saved?* as in *Jam. i. 13, &c. Let no man say I am tempted of God; for God tempteth not any man.*

Declining Christians are quickened, awakened, and put in mind of the *love of their espousals: as in Rev. iii. 2. be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die.*

They awfully warn those who are in danger of sinning and falling back to Perdition; telling them, *the righteousness they have done will be remember'd no more, and God's soul will have no pleasure in them; as in Heb. vi. 4, &c. It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify the Son of God afresh.*

They incourage the persecuted and afflicted; telling them, *when they pass thro' fire and water, God will be with them, and that when they are try'd, they shall come forth as*

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as gold, and be the Lord's in the day that he maketh up his jewels: As in Rom. viii. 18. The sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. And Heb. xii. We are compassed with a cloud of witnesses—Jesus endured the cross, and is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high—whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and that for our profit—chastning yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And more particularly, those that lament Relations dead in Christ, are told, they shall go to be happy with them, tho' the dead shall not return: as in 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. Sorrow not as others that have no hope; for them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

There are also particular Lessons for strong Christians, viz. to be tender to the Weak, and to be publick Spirited; that as Ephraim should not envy Judah, so neither should Judah vex Ephraim: Rom. xiv. Him that is weak in the faith receive—Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not—Let none put a stumbling block in his brother's way—Let not your good be ill spoken of—Hast thou faith, have it to thy self—Bear the infirmities of the weak—Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification. And in 1 Cor. viii. Knowledge puffs up; but charity edifies—Let not your liberty be a stumbling block to the weak—nor through thy knowledge let thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died—If meat

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make

make my brother to offend, I'll eat no flesh whilst the world stands. Again they are told, that *a mark is set upon the men* that deplore the Sins of the Times ; and *a book of Remembrance is written* for those who distinguish themselves by their Piety in Times of abounding Wickedness : as in *Rev. iii. 4. Thou hast a few names who have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

You find also a suitable Portion for those who are groaning under Corruption ; who complain they were *shapen in iniquity*, and their actual errors are *past understanding*, in *Rom. vii.* Altho' I am carnal, sold under sin, and what I would I do not, and what I hate that do I ; in my flesh dwells no good, and to perform good I find not, yea with the flesh I serve the law of sin (oh wretched man that I am!) yet I consent to God's law, and delight in it after the inner-man ; it is not then I that do this evil, but sin that dwelleth in me—I thank God through Christ, with my mind I serve God's law, and God will deliver me from the body of this death. And they are told how God has laid on Christ our iniquities, and he will be the Lord our righteousness and strength : 1 John ii. 1. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

The Humble and Penitent, who are of a contrite spirit, and tremble at God's word, are comforted, 2 Cor. vii. Ye were sorry indeed, ^{it was}

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'twas but for a season—'Twas after a godly Manner—I rejoyce in it—Such sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of—It wrought in you carefulness, fear, desire, zeal and revenge; you have approved your selves clear in this matter.

They who want Direction, and cry out, *Oh that my Ways were [directed to keep thy statutes!]* are sent to God for Council, *Jam. i. 5. If any lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, and it shall be given him.*

The *deceiver and the deceived*, (*viz.* those of evil Minds, who seduce others, and those that are mislead in the Simplicity of their Hearts) are to be distinctly and differently treated, *Jude 22. On some have compassion, and others save with fear.*

As for those of the House of *Israel* in desolation, who *mourn after the Lord, who walk in darkness and see no light, and say the Lord hath forsaken me*, there were, I believe, few, if any, in those Days of the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, when the Gospel-Church was in its infancy, and *a Nation was to be born in a day*; but few, I say, who had Doubts about their Sincerity: they had Persecutions, Distresses, and Exercises of another Sort; and those were sufficient. I am apt to think such Cases were also rare in the beginning of the Reformation from *Popery*: which seems to be the Occasion of some of the first Reformers confounding Faith with Assurance. However, there are laid up, even in the New Testament, some proper

per Hints of Council, for such as should in after-times labour under the Hidings of God's Face; as, to *examine themselves*—*For this to beseech the Lord*—*To clear themselves of Sin*—*Not to faint in well doing*; and the like.

Brethren, From your Acquaintance with the Scriptures, you'll easily perceive that I could as happily run this Specimen much farther thro' the sacred Writings. And if you peruse the Writings of the most powerful and successful Preachers, particularly the *Puritan* Divines, you'll see that they herein imitated the great Leaders of the Christian Profession; and were large in their particular Application to several sorts of Persons; suiting their Discourses to all the Variety of the Hearts of Men, and Sorts and Frames of Christians, according to the true Precepts of Oratory and Christianity. In this Way they found their own Hearts warmed, and thus they reached the Hearts of their Hearers; whilst many were imagining the Minister had been told of their Case, and made the Sermon for them: and so was verified that Passage in *Heb. iv. 12.* *The word of God is quick and powerful—a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Now what Success can we reasonably expect, if we do not take into close Consideration the Case of our several spiritual Patients?

If a Man professing *Physick*, should administer or give out one constant Medicine for Fevers, and another for Consumptions, and so for other

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other Distempers, without considering the Age, Constitution, Strength, and way of Living of his Patient ; and not vary his Method and Medicines as those varied ; we should hardly call this the regular Practice of *Physick*: nor can I think this general and undistinguishing Way will be more safe, or likely to answer its End, in *Divinity* than in *Medicine*.

Now I rest perswaded, Brethren, the thing is so evident you can't but allow, 'tis the best to suit our selves to all the Variety of Tempers and Experience of the Hearers, if it can be done ; and I hope I may successfully offer some Thoughts upon the Way how this Skill may be attained.

Above all then, carefully study your own Hearts, and preach over the ruder Sketches of your Sermons to your selves first ; by which Means the corresponding Workings of your own Hearts and Affections, may furnish you with proper Thoughts wherewith to apply closely to all, whose Temper, and Experience, and Case is like your own : for what is supplied to your imperfect Notes, out of the applicatory Meditations of your own Minds on the Subject, will very probably, according to the usual way of the Spirit, happily and powerfully reach those of the same Make in like Circumstances.

But alas ! one Man's Experience falls far short of all the Variety of Mens Hearts, and of the Spirit's Work ; nay, those whose Heads are turned for close and regular Thought, and whose

whose Time has been spent in Study and Letters, as they go on more rationally and evenly in Religion, have less variety of Experience, than many of a different Mold and Way of Thinking. Here it will be needful then to look out of our selves, and take a larger View, in order to be acquainted with Cases and Tempers different from our own; and with such Methods of the Spirit's Work, as we our selves have never experienced, but many others have. Now the best and original Way of getting this Acquaintance with Men, and with God's Workings in them, (and I may add of Satan's Workings also) is by conversing freely with the serious People of our Flock.

I know your Thoughts will prevent me with an Objection: You'll say, this is almost impracticable, especially amongst Persons of Politeness and Figure; these alas! too rarely will use any such Freedom with us, in laying open their Hearts, and communicating their Experiences to us, as to give us the needful Information—If we ever do arrive at any Acquaintance with the Experience of Christians, 'tis little thanks to such as these; they expect we should preach suitably to them, and that with as much Reason as *Nebuchadnezzar* demanded of the wise Men to interpret a Dream they knew not: The middle and lower Sort of People indeed, are more unreserved to grave Ministers of Age and Standing; but will hardly use the same Freedom with young Men.

To

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To help you over this Difficulty, I would observe; that as for *the Polite, and Men of some Thought and Reading*, your own Experience, with the Allowances and Corrections, a moderate Skill in Human Nature, will enable you to make, may lead you into happy Conjectures at their way of Thinking; Besides, in the time of their Visitation, under some sore Affliction, you shall find them more communicative; and an Hours free Discourse, with such as can give a rational and intelligible Account of themselves, in a Season when they are disposed to do it, is as valuable and useful, as it is rare and difficult to enter into.

Again, have an Eye upon *the serious Youth*, whom Nature and Providence has designed to place in a superior Class; and especially at a Time when the Impressions of Religion are new to them: You shall find them more open than elder Persons, if you court their Intimacy, and relieve their Bashfulness; And if you can see into the Heart of a Youth, then with the proper Allowances for the Alterations that Age and Business will make, you may pretty well guess at their Turn of Mind in more advanced Years.

With the Generality of *serious and more advanced Christians*, there needs not so much Nicety, to get into such a spiritual Intimacy with them as we desire; the laying aside Nicety and Ceremony, and getting into such a grave good natured Way as our Character requires, is more than half-way to our Purpose;

pose: Where this is insufficient to encourage the People to Freedom; lead them into it by communicating first, either what your selves have experienced, under the Name of a third Person (if Modesty or Prudence require) or else what you have learned from others, without betraying the Confidence they have put in you: By these Methods we shall seldom fail of drawing serious People on to such a Freedom, as will be of Use to them and our selves——If we heartily go about it, we are pretty sure to succeed.

I may farther hint at a compendious Way for the gaining much Knowledge of Mens Hearts in a little Time, *viz.* If you have any tolerable skill in the different Tempers and Complexions of Mankind, distribute in your Thoughts your People into Classes, according to their natural Genius and Temper, and select one of each Class to be more particularly acquainted with; for amongst those whom Nature has formed alike, you shall find upon farther Enquiry, a strange Uniformity in the Spirit's Work and Way of Proceeding with them.

I might recommend a Way of knowing these Things at second Hand, *viz.* from the most popular and experimental Authors; but this Way is far inferior to the other; and we shall but faintly paint any Phœnomenon of the Heart, by copying another Picture; 'tis infinitely preferable to do it from the Life. Yet would I earnestly recommend the Perusal of such Authors, as deal much in an experimental

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tal Strain, and have been very successful in it; but with a different Design, *viz.* That we may learn from them, how to describe, in a discreet and lively Manner, such Cases as we ourselves have observed; and how to address properly to those Cases, with the like Thoughts and Expressions, as have in the Course of their Preaching happily answered the End.

After all, rightly to divide the Word of Truth, with true Wisdom, is a Matter of no small Difficulty; but if we carefully and diligently go about it, with a Zeal for our Master's Interest, and sensible of our own Insufficiency, *asking wisdom of God*, we know *he giveth liberally*, and will surely make us *wise to win souls*, to the honour of his Name, and our own *rejoycing in the day of the Lord Jesus*; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, that one God whom we adore, be paid the highest Honours and Praises to eternal Ages. *Amen.*



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